

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

INSIDE
TRACKS

The Newsletter of Region One

Volume 9, No. 1

Winter 1999

Fall Lion Season Proves To Be a Big Success

Every once in a while, things work out as planned.

Several years ago, FWP Commissioner Charlie Decker suggested a fall "encounter" season for mountain lions, so that hunters during the general deer/elk season could legally take a lion at close range. The season has become a reality, and it has turned out exactly as Decker hoped.

Hunters took 12 lions during the fall hunting season in northwest Montana. The harvest included 4 male lions and 8 females; none of the females was lactating. Young adult lions made up most of the harvest, and according to FWP Wildlife Manager Harvey Nyberg, this is highly desirable.

"These young lions represent the surplus members of the population," said FWP Wildlife Manager Harvey Nyberg. "In many of these cases, the hunter would have killed the lion in self defense."

In fact, most of the 12 lions were taken at close range. For example, Ricki Van Clay was watching some elk on a ridge at dawn when he heard a

"screaming noise" from two lions close by. The two lions then approached Clay and several hunting companions; Clay shot once in an attempt to scare the lions, but they kept coming. Finally, Clay killed a 120-pound lion at less than 10 feet; the other lion ran off. In this and many other instances, the hunter legally harvested a game animal
(Cont. on Page 2)

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A GROUP OF LIONS passes a remote camera station in the Swan Mountain Range. Young lions, the age class most likely to conflict with humans, made up most of the harvest in northwest Montana's fall season.

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FALL LION HUNTING SEASON

Only in the 100 series districts. Mountain lion may be taken during the fall season (Oct. 25 - Nov. 29 except Hds 150 & 151). The season will close on Nov. 29 or upon reaching 20% of the quota established for the winter season (as shown below). **Use Of Dogs Is Prohibited During This Season. Reporting Requirements Are The Same.**

During this season female lions with kittens should not be taken. If a lactating female is killed, the hunter is to inform an official of FWP as soon after the kill as possible so that an attempt can be made to backtrack the lion and locate the kittens. No juveniles (with body spots) shall be killed. The fall season harvest will be deducted from the winter season quota.

WINTER LION HUNTING SEASON (DEC. 1 - APRIL 14)

Females with kittens may not be taken. If a lactating female is killed, she shall be back tracked and the kittens captured and turned over to FWP within 24 hours (kittens are young of the year). No juveniles (with body spots) shall be killed.

PLEASE RETURN

Fall Lion Season Proves To Be a Big Success

(Cont. from Page 1)

rather than killing it strictly in self-defense.

And the fall season has given many hunters an additional opportunity at a relatively low cost (a lion tag costs \$15).

"Most of the hunters I've talked to

are pleased with this added opportunity," said Nyberg. "Also, some of the hunters use their license during the winter season to expand the length of time they can hunt. And some of these hunters contract with an outfitter."

During the fall hunting season, hunters took lions in 9 of the 16 Region

One Hunting Districts. One district, 123, closed when the fall quota of 2 was reached.

Northwest Montana (FWP Region One) is the only region in the state with a fall lion season. The first fall season was conducted in 1997.

Tentative Hunting Regulations Include Changes in Lion Permit System

The Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks Commission adopted tentative 1999 hunting regulations at their meeting last month in Helena. Among the tentative regulations is a change in the lion permit system for the winter season.

In the proposed system, hunters would have two options:

Option 1: The hunter may apply for a limited entry permit. For each hunting district, 50 percent of the quota will be reserved for these permits. The permit holder would be able to hunt for a lion from the beginning of the fall season to the end of the winter season. This would allow the permit holder to be selective and not be pressured to take a lion before the quota is reached in a district.

Option 2: The balance of the quota for each district would be filled as it is now; when that quota is reached the open permit season for the district would close.

According to Wildlife Manager Harvey Nyberg, the new system will allow serious lion hunters more time to select a trophy lion. "Many hunters are looking for a large male," he said. "This system will allow the permit holder the opportunity to make a serious effort to take one."

There are no changes proposed in the fall lion season.

For deer, the Commission adopted the status quo, which includes buck-only hunting in most of northwest Montana. As in 1998, hunters in hunting district 170 will be able to take either sex, either species of deer, and one antlerless B-tag per hunter will be

available. Also, 200 youth permits will be awarded through the standard drawings. Some doe hunting opportunity is available for the Bob Marshall Wilderness, areas 150 and 151.

Region One elk hunting will be guided by the same general season rules as in 1998. Hunting is for brow-tine bull only, with cow elk on permit. The Commission proposed reducing cow permit numbers in hunting districts 120, 123, 124, and 141.

The deer and elk hunting regulations are very conservative, and reflect the continued population losses from the winter of 1996/97.

No changes are proposed for black bear hunting regulations in Region

One. During 1998, a record number of black bear were harvested in northwest Montana. The harvest of 700 bears during the spring and fall seasons compares to an average of about 500 bears harvested each year during the period of record.

The Region One Hearing on the 1999 Tentative Hunting Regulations is scheduled for Saturday, January 16, 1999 at the Outlaw Inn in Kalispell. There will be an open house at 9 a.m. with information available on the regulations. The hearing begins at 10 a.m.



HUNTERS WILL BE RESTRICTED to buck only hunting in northwest Montana again in 1999. Here a father and son pose with a fine whitetail buck taken on the last day of the 1998 season in Hunting District 130.

Two New Members Join Citizen Advisory Group

Bob Hensler of Libby and Vic McAllister of Ronan are the two newest members of Region One's Citizen Advisory Committee. The addition brings the membership of the Committee back to 11 members; two members recently left after completing their terms.


Hensler has been interested in the Committee since its formation three years ago. His interests include: mountain lion issues, Kootenai drainage fisheries, land conservation agreements, mitigation, and block management.

He is an avid upland bird hunter, dog trainer, and trout angler. "I have the time to serve on the Committee, and I feel I have valuable experience to

contribute," says the retired wildlife biologist and planner. Hensler spent 30 years in various wildlife jobs, mostly in federal service.

McAllister is a rancher/farmer who lives south of Ronan. He is an avid hunter, pursuing both waterfowl and big game. Vic has attended many wildlife meetings and is very knowledgeable about land conservation.

Region One's Citizen Advisory Committee advises FWP on a wide range of fish, wildlife, parks, and enforcement issues in northwest Montana. Members serve as volunteers, and attend about six meetings per year with Region One FWP staff. The Committee had improved the two-way com-

munication of ideas between FWP and the public since its inception in early 1996. 



THE NEWEST MEMBERS of Region One's Citizen Advisory Committee are Bob Hensler and Vic McAllister.

From the Commissioner

Charlie Decker, FWP Commissioner, Libby

Dear Fellow Sportsmen (and women),

In our lifetime, we may see the end of public hunting and fishing. In my opinion we will lose a true American heritage — if hunting or fishing moves beyond the average person into a pastime for only the wealthy.

There are three keys to our future: land, wildlife and sportsmen.

First, our public lands face increasing pressure from all sides. Block management is under-funded. As hunters or fishermen, we need to pay our way. If I were a politician, I'd tell you we can have more with less money. As a sportsman, I say that increased fees will help protect our ability to have quality hunts on public land.

More and more private land is leased for the exclusive use of the well-heeled. Farmers and ranchers have every right to sell the use of their land, but I think we ought to help landowners find an economic incentive to grant public access. It should be more than the right thing to do. We should make it the smart thing to do.

Second, we need to manage wildlife without politics. We have to take a long-term perspective on the health of our wildlife. In my mind, no man owns a bull elk... not until it falls by his hand. The same is true for trout, pheasant or any other wild animal. We should not let short-term economic pressures or special interest groups govern our resources.

Finally, we have met the enemy, and he is us. The



lack of ethics will end public hunting or fishing faster than any other force. When we hunt public or private land, we must act like stewards. We earn our right to hunt every time we pass a questionable shot, every time we report a poacher, every time we teach our children the right way. Our game laws ought to be the toughest in the nation...and every game warden should have a thousand pairs of eyes in the community.

In the spirit of the holidays, let's stop fighting each other: bow hunter versus black powder hunter, sportsman versus rancher, resident versus nonresident. Let's try to work on giving our grandchildren the same great public hunting and fishing we have enjoyed. Drop me a line, if you have any thoughts on this.

Charlie Decker
176 Hammer Road
Libby, MT 59923
406-293-6465

Hunter Education News

Atkinson, Sommerfield take new positions

Kalispell area Lead Hunter Education Instructor Dan Atkinson will take on a new responsibility in Region One. Atkinson will serve as the lead fundraiser and trainer among the northwest Montana Hunter Education Programs. He will serve as a volunteer and receive no pay for these duties. Atkinson will also continue to serve as the lead operator of the Hunter Education Shooting Center.

Atkinson will assist programs around northwest Montana in obtaining additional funds for field courses and live firing exercises. He will also assist programs in meeting state requirements for standard teaching methods, and assist in instructor recruitment and community outreach.

Atkinson has already raised over \$5,000 from the National Rifle Association and other sources for the Kalispell, Bigfork and Eureka programs. In the coming year he will expand these efforts into other areas of Region One.

Hunter Education Instructor Dale Sommerfield will take over as Volunteer Lead Instructor for the Kalispell Program. Sommerfield has been instrumental in helping to develop the field course for the Kalispell program, and is known for his effectiveness and fairness.

Both Atkinson and Sommerfield have high praise for Hunter Education Instructors in the Region.

"It's rewarding to see the quality and dedication of the volunteer instructors," Atkinson says. "It works because so many people have the willingness and enthusiasm to take leadership roles."

Don Bothwell serves on Advisory Council

Hunter Education Instructor Don Bothwell has completed his initial duties as a representative on the statewide Hunter Behavior Advisory Council. Bothwell represented northwest Montana on the council, which was designed to identify poor hunting

behaviors and propose corrective actions. Bothwell served without compensation during the one-year effort. Council members will continue to track this issue.

The Advisory Council recommended a combination of stiffer penalties for wildlife law violators, and increased continuing hunter education. The Fish, Wildlife & Parks Commission was impressed with the work of the council and the quality of their recommendations.

The Commission and others will look at implementing some of the Council's recommendations in the near future.

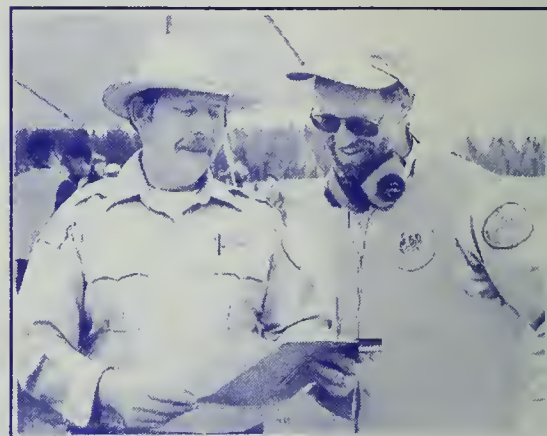
Wes Plummer develops demonstration deer

Hunter Education Instructor Wes Plummer has developed a demonstration deer which can be used to illustrate the animal's internal anatomy and techniques for field dress-

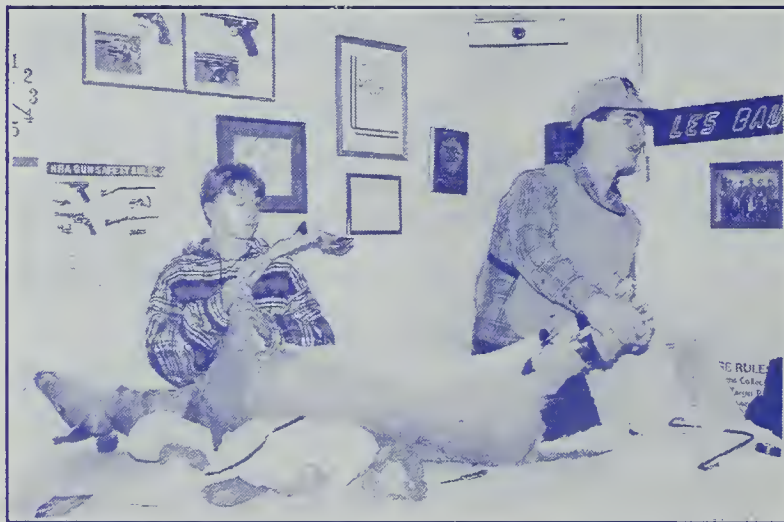
ing. The deer includes realistic internal organs.

Plummer assembled the deer reach as many hunters as possible with a message on proper care of game animals. As a professional meat cutter and owner of Lower Valley Meats south of Kalispell, Plummer has seen many animals which had not been cared for properly.

For more information about the deer, or for a brochure on proper care of game animals, contact Plummer at 752-2846.



DISCUSSION. In the photo above Dan Atkinson (left) and Dale Sommerfield confer at the fall 1998 Kalispell Hunter Education Field Course.



SHOW AND TELL. Hunter Education Instructor Wes Plummer and an assistant demonstrate proper methods of caring for harvested big game animals.



DEDICATION. Hunter Education Instructor Don Bothwell has donated many hours to improve hunter education in Montana. He recently served on the statewide Hunter Behavior Advisory Council.

Trapper Education Courses Attract 100 Students

About 100 students attended the two Trapper Education Classes held in Kalispell in October and December.

At the courses, students learn about trapping ethics, responsibility, landowner relations, regulations, and fur handling. Hands-on opportunities are available to learn trap sets and skinning techniques.

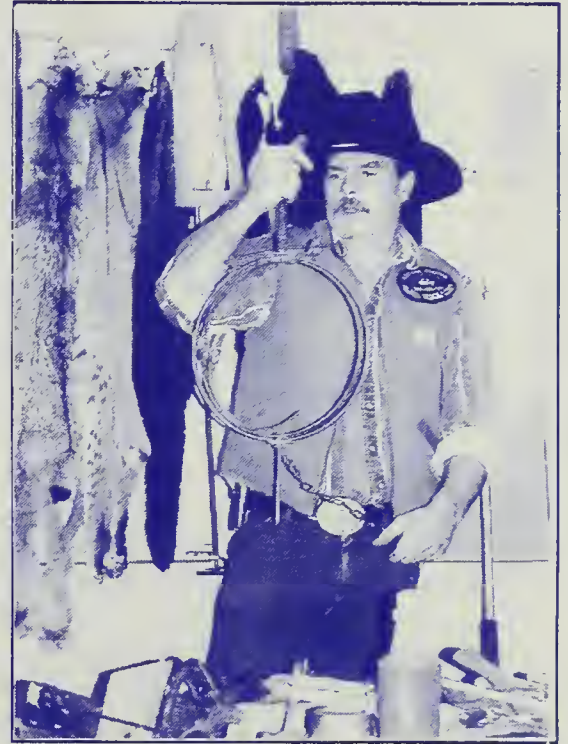
At the most recent class held in December, more than 60 students were treated to presentations and demonstrations by a number of expert in-

structors from across the state. Most of the students were adults, but about a dozen youngsters also attended the class.

The Montana Trappers Association and FWP recommend that all prospective trappers attend a Trapper Education Course. Courses are offered across the state; for more information, contact Dennis Schutz, Education Coordinator for MTA at 777-3929, or your local MTA representative.

Trapper Education Course Scheduled for Libby

A Trapper Education Course has been scheduled for Libby on Saturday, Jan. 23, 1999, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the 1st National Bank Building. Call FWP's Libby Field Station 293-4161, extension 107, to register for the course. The course is free and everyone is welcome.



LIKE THE OLDEN DAYS. Instructor Gary Wilson demonstrates the setting of an antique trap at the December 12 Kalispell course.

MTA PRESIDENT Ed Hebbe, III answers a question from the class on snaring techniques



DEMONSTRATING SKINNING TECHNIQUE. Instructor Dennis Schutz conducts the popular skinning/fleshing demonstration at the fall class.



GETTING ALONG WITH LAND-OWNERS. Instructor Tressa Schutter talks to a packed house about land-owner relations



1999 Fish Stocking Plan Up for Review


The 1999 fish stocking plan for Montana waters is available for review at the Region One FWP office in Kalispell. The plan outlines the fish species, number stocked, size, hatchery, and purpose for stocking for hundreds of lakes across the state.

FWP operates nine hatcheries, including the Flathead Lake Hatchery at Somers, the Jocko River Trout Hatchery at Arlee, and Murray Springs Hatchery at Eureka.

The first state of Montana hatchery began operations in 1908 near Anaconda. Until the early 1950s, fish stocking was FWP's major fish management activity. In recent years,

hatchery fish have been used to restore native fish populations, as well as to provide fishing recreation in wilderness, rural, and even urban settings.

About half of the fishing in Montana takes place on waters that are stocked. FWP recognizes the importance of hatchery fish to the overall fish management program, and strives to provide disease-free fish which do not conflict with existing fish populations.

If you would like to learn more about FWP's stocking plan, contact Fisheries Manager Jim Vashro in Kalispell at 752-5501. 



A HAPPY ANGLER shows off his catch from a mountain lake in northwest Montana. The westslope cutthroat trout planted by FWP exhibit excellent growth rates in many high elevation lakes.

Trout Stocking in Northwest Montana

Trout lakes, self sustaining: 116

Trout Lakes, stocked: 230

Total Trout Lakes: 346

A complete summary of fish stocking of all lakes in Region One is available at the FWP office in Kalispell.

Anglers Reminded of Ice Fishing Regulations

Cold weather is finally here, and ice has formed on many area lakes. Here are the major ice fishing regulations to keep in mind:

Number of Rods/Lines

- Two rods and/or lines may be used to fish through ice on all lakes, reservoirs, or ponds open to fishing in the Western and Central districts. Six rods and/or lines may be used to fish through ice on lakes, reservoirs, and ponds open to fishing in the Eastern District. See a particular fishing district's special regulations for exceptions to this restriction.

Size of Hole

- The maximum size hole that may be used for ice fishing is 144 square inches.

- There is no size limit for a hole used for fishing with a spear.

Shelters

- Use: It is illegal to use any ice-fishing shelter not conforming to rules.

- Shelter definition: Any hut or enclosure constructed of any material except ice or snow for the purpose of ice fishing.

- Shelter identification: All shelters at all public waters must be marked




KOKANEE are one of the most popular species with ice fishermen (and "fisherkids"!) in northwest Montana.

with the owner's name, address, and/or phone number. This identification must be painted on (or permanently affixed to) the shelter in legible, 2-inch letters plainly visible at a distance of 100 feet. For fabric shelters or tents, identification may be placed on a sign attached to the outside of the shelter.

- Inspection: Each closed shelter shall have a door that an officer may readily open from the outside for inspection when it is occupied.

- Removal after the season: The owner of an ice-fishing shelter shall remove it from the ice before it becomes irretrievable at the end of the season.

- Waste and rubbish disposal: Owners and occupants of shelters are required to keep their shelters (and the area immediately around them) free from rubbish and trash. Anglers must remove waste materials before they leave for the day. 

—Youngsters are the key to our wildlife traditions—

Recently, members of the local rod and gun club were surveyed on member's attitudes towards important fishing issues. As part of the survey, ages and gender of club attendees were documented. We found out that the average age was 54. Know how many women or girls were in the audience that particular night? One. Let's face it guys, we're aging. What's more, we generally think the same on all too many issues. Is that OK? Maybe . . . But what's this "sportsmen club" going to look like 10 years, 20 or 30 years down the road? Will it even exist?

If it is important to you that your beliefs, your values, and your traditions are passed along to future generations, make the commitment now to do something about it in 1999. If not, skip to the next article, or better yet get a copy of Sports Illustrated and quit complaining about anti-hunters.

Nearly everyone involved in hunting, fishing, and trapping debates acknowledge that the atti-

Young Hunter Successful



THIRTEEN-YEAR-OLD Thomas Herman was lucky to draw a moose permit the first year he applied. Here he poses with the bull moose he bagged on November 13, 1998 in Hunting District 111. Thomas took the moose with one well-placed shot while hunting with his grandfather, Don Herman. Thomas's father, Steve, says the antlers measure about 40 inches. Congratulations, Thomas.



FAMILY OUTING. Katie, Travis, and Shannon Vincent on a recent family hunt in central Montana.

tudes of today's youth will soon define these traditions. Animal rights groups object to the youth hunts which many states now sponsor to teach gun safety and attract recruits to this tradition. "Both sides are going after the same targets," says Heidi Prescott, National Director for the Fund for Animals.

Lessons about life and death, and appreciation for our natural resources and conservation ethic, are experienced by those who connect with nature through hunting, fishing, and trapping. So what's going to happen if kids don't have these opportunities? Who will protect the important resources when we're gone?

Please, make a New Year's resolution today to take a boy or girl hunting or fishing, whether it be your son, your grandson, your granddaughter, their friends, or the kid next door. Share the joys of these traditions, so they may continue.

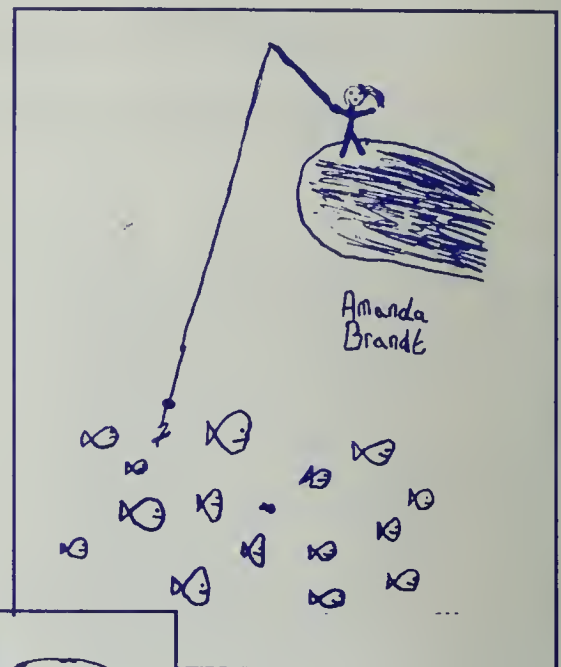
Have a Happy New Year! 🐾

KIDS' CORNER

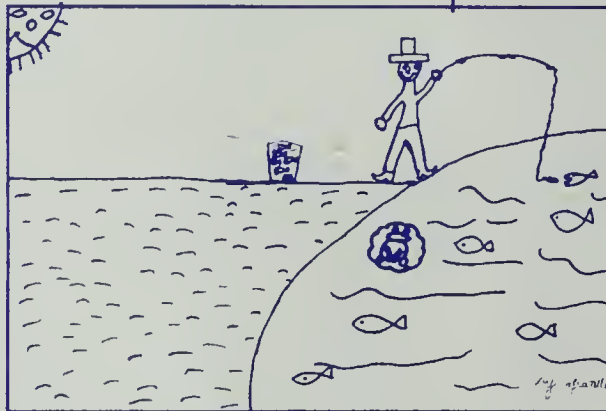
Young fish poets: There are now nearly 1,200 students in north-west Montana enrolled in the "Hooked on Fishing, Not Drugs" program. Elementary students learn about fish biology, habitat, ethics, and fishing, and apply their knowledge in math, science, and literature exercises.

Here are three poems by 4th grade students in Mrs. Sorlie's Hooked on Fishing class at Helena Flats School near Kalispell:

*Fishy fishy in the sea
I see you but do you see me?*
(Drawing and poem
by Amanda Brandt)



*Fish, Fish
I like fish
Yes I truly do
Big ones, fat ones
And little green stinky ones
There's no doubt about it
I love fish
DON'T YOU?*
by Kari Jo Long



*Fish
Fish
I fish like this*
(Drawing and poem
by Janelle Schmeusser)



For more information on Fish, Wildlife & Parks issues, listen to:
"Northwest Outdoors,"
FWP's weekly radio show, Thursdays at 8:35 a.m.
on KGEZ, 600 AM.

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